



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
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FROM: Wendy L. Watanabe *Wendy L. Watanabe*
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES HARRIS-RODDE
SETTLEMENTS – AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY AND EMERGENCY
DEPARTMENT BOARDING TIME REVIEW FOR THE QUARTER
ENDED MARCH 31, 2009**

At the request of the Department of Health Services (DHS), we reviewed LAC+USC Medical Center's (LAC+USC) compliance with the requirements of the Harris-Rodde lawsuit settlements. Our review indicates that LAC+USC met the settlement requirements for the quarter ended March 31, 2009.

Background

In December 2005, the County settled lawsuits with plaintiffs Harris and Rodde regarding reducing the number of beds at the LAC+USC replacement facility to 600 non-psychiatric beds. Under the settlements, LAC+USC was allowed to immediately reduce 25 budgeted, non-psychiatric beds. LAC+USC was also allowed to reduce an additional 35 budgeted, non-psychiatric beds for each quarter LAC+USC reduced the Average Length of Stay (ALOS) by 0.3 days, compared to the previous quarter (from an initial baseline of 6.5 days), and maintained a median Emergency Department Boarding Time (EDBT) under seven hours. The settlement agreements require the Auditor-Controller to verify the ALOS and EDBT when LAC+USC reports that they have met the targets. We previously reported that LAC+USC had accurately reported meeting the ALOS and EDBT requirements for the quarter ended December 31, 2006, the quarters ended March 31, June 30, and December 31, 2007, and the quarters ended March 31,

June 30, and September 30, 2008. We reported that LAC+USC did not meet the ALOS requirement for the quarters ended September 30, 2007 and December 31, 2008. Our review of LAC+USC's compliance with EDBT requirements was limited to the visits for which LAC+USC had the documentation needed to validate the patients' EDBT.

County Counsel (Counsel) previously informed us that, once LAC+USC met the ALOS target of 5.5 days, no further reductions of ALOS would be required. However, since LAC+USC has achieved the 600 bed level, the ALOS target has been adjusted to 5.6 days. Counsel has advised the plaintiffs that LAC+USC will maintain an ALOS of 5.6 days or less and a median EDBT under seven hours through the December 31, 2009 end of the settlement agreements. The settlement agreements have since expired.

Review of Reported ALOS

ALOS is the average time between when patients are admitted and when they are discharged from the hospital. LAC+USC records both the admission and discharge on the Hospital's Affinity computer system (Affinity). For the quarter ended March 31, 2009, LAC+USC reported an ALOS of 5.6 days.

We reviewed a random statistical sample of 54 records for the quarter ended March 31, 2009 to determine if LAC+USC had accurately reported the ALOS on Affinity. The ALOS reported on Affinity for the 54 records we reviewed equaled the ALOS of six days reported on the patients' medical records, indicating that LAC+USC accurately reported the ALOS.

Review of Reported EDBT

EDBT is the time between when an Emergency Department (ED) physician writes an order for a patient to be placed in an inpatient bed (pre-admit date/time) and when the patient is actually placed in the bed (ED discharge date/time).

For the quarter ended March 31, 2009, LAC+USC reported a median EDBT of 5.52 hours. To ensure that LAC+USC included all visits that are subject to the EDBT requirement, we tested a random statistical sample of 103 visits that were excluded from the median EDBT calculation to determine if the visits were properly excluded (e.g., patients who were not admitted as inpatients or were admitted from an outpatient clinic should be excluded from the calculation). We noted that all visits in our sample were appropriately excluded from the EDBT calculation.

We reviewed a random statistical sample of 111 visits to verify the EDBT reported on Affinity. We noted that the EDBT for five visits (5%) did not agree to the source documents we reviewed. Specifically:

- For three visits (3%), the source documents we reviewed showed a longer EDBT than was recorded on Affinity. The EDBT on Affinity for the visits was understated by an average of 0.54 hours.
- For two visits (2%), the source documents we reviewed showed a shorter EDBT than was recorded on Affinity. The EDBT on Affinity for the visits was overstated by an average of 24 hours.

Overall, our sample of 111 visits showed an EDBT equal to the EDBT recorded on Affinity, 6.77 hours.

DHS and LAC+USC management cooperated during our review and actively participated in the review process. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Jim Schneiderman at (213) 253-0101.

WLW:MMO:JLS:mwm

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